
Information Handbook

for



to

Singapore

Prepared by the Public Affairs Section
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INTRODUCTION

This handbook provides U.S. Fulbright scholars with a general introduction to Singapore and practical information on residing, working, and studying here. We do not intend this handbook as a comprehensive guide to all aspects of living here: the handbook focuses primarily on the practical concerns of American scholars coming to Singapore to further their academic goals. It also provides specific survival tips based on comments from previous American Fulbright scholars to Singapore.

This handbook is tailored to everyday life in Singapore and supplements the general “Orientation Handbook: A Guide for U.S. Fulbright Fellows” prepared by the Institute of International Education (IIE) and available on the IIE website.

Please contact the Public Affairs Section at the U.S. Embassy in Singapore early in your preparation process, and keep us informed as your plans develop. We want to help your Fulbright experience be professionally and personally rewarding, so please don’t hesitate to contact us if you have any questions about your Fulbright award.

Congratulations! We look forward to seeing you in Singapore.

Eric Watnik
Public Affairs Officer

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CHAPTER ONE:

PRE-DEPARTURE

I. Pre-Departure Checklist

Below is a list of tasks that should be completed before departing the U.S.:

- Ensure that your passport is valid for at least six months after your arrival date in Singapore. If not, apply for a new passport. You should also ensure that you have sufficient blank pages left on your passport so that immigration officers can put arrival and departure stamps when you travel. Otherwise, you should arrange to have additional pages added to your passport. If you are applying for a new passport, please request the 52-page book, which is a no-cost option.
- Gather information about Singapore.
- Assemble documents, certificates, and other records that you may need in Singapore (a checklist is provided on the next page).
- Talk to your school or host institution about the type of Singapore visa you will need. Having an In-Principle Approval Letter (from your host institution) in hand before you arrive in Singapore will make the transition much easier. Based on one of the Fulbrighter's experience, conversations regarding visa should take place far in advance of departure to Singapore. Most host institutions use the Training Employment Pass (TEP) – see <http://www.mom.gov.sg/foreign-manpower/passes-visas/training-employment/before-you-apply/Pages/default.aspx> for U.S. Fulbrighters in Singapore. But your host institution will ultimately decide which is best. You are encouraged to check to see if your host institution can help you fill out and submit the form.) If you have other questions about visas, you may also contact the Singapore Embassy in Washington directly. For more information, see <http://www.mfa.gov.sg/washington>
- Complete the required immunizations before your departure date. Make sure you use the proper form required by the Singapore authorities. Recommended vaccinations for travel to the Southeast Asian region can be viewed on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/seasia.htm>.
- Arrange to forward your mail or have a trusted, reliable person handle it in your absence. Forward your change of address to the post office, insurance companies, credit cards, tax office, and magazine subscriptions.
- Visit <http://travel.state.gov> for country-specific safety information and for information about voting while overseas.

- Organize your finances. Arrange for automatic deposit of your stipend and automatic deduction of recurring bills. Set up an internet banking account and determine how you will get cash overseas (e.g., with an ATM card). Check with your bank to ensure that your PIN number in the United States will also work overseas. Alert your credit card company to your travel plans, so they do not reject seemingly suspicious overseas charges.
- Decide what to bring to Singapore. Store, sell, or give away other belongings.
- Prepare to arrange for housing in Singapore. Arrange for short term housing before coming to Singapore. If you have a friend who lives in Singapore or family members who have connections, that's great. Or you can stay in a hostel while looking for long term housing.)
- Settle all personal business (cancel newspaper subscription, utilities, phone service; return library books, etc.).
- Inform your friends and business contacts of your move and give them your new contact information. Update your address book.
- Spend time with family and friends before you say goodbye.

A. Important Documents

Plan ahead! You may need to visit various offices to obtain the following documents before your departure:

- ✓ Passport valid for at least six months after your arrival
- ✓ Plane tickets
- ✓ Internationally recognized credit cards/PINs
- ✓ Internationally recognized ATM card/PIN
- ✓ American driver's license
- ✓ Insurance policies (travel, health, life, home/renter's, car, and belongings)
- ✓ Extra passport photos (for travel in the region; can be done in Singapore)
- ✓ Certified copy of birth certificate
- ✓ Marriage certificate, if applicable
- ✓ Medical and dental records, including inoculation records
- ✓ Prescriptions for eyeglasses, contact lenses, and drugs
- ✓ Official copy of college/university transcripts
- ✓ Copies of college/university diploma

B. Items to Bring

With a few exceptions, you can find almost everything in Singapore that you use in the States. While some items may be more expensive in Singapore, the higher price is still usually less than the cost of shipping or mailing the item yourself.

Clothing for the climate

Bring lightweight but sturdy, machine-washable spring/summer clothing. At the same time, it is still usually comfortable enough to wear pants and jeans here. Singapore is hot, humid and often rainy year-round; however, air-conditioned buildings can be quite chilly (many women carry pashminas or shawls). Dry cleaning is available, but it is expensive. Also, think about investing in waterproof sandals or boots because when it rains it really rains. Some Singaporeans wear flip flops and then change into shoes when they arrive at their offices.

Clothing sizes

If you wear a small to average size for an American, you can easily find clothes and shoes in Singapore. Clothing sizes tend to run smaller than in the United States, so an average-sized American may find him/herself wearing an XL here. If you wear a tall size or a size bigger than a ladies' 8, you will want to bring more clothing.

If you wear larger than a ladies' size 8, a man's size 10 or need special widths, you will need to bring your own shoes. A pair of slip-on shoes or sandals is handy, as people

remove their shoes before entering temples or when visiting homes. There are some American brands, however the prices tend to be a lot higher than you are used to.

Electronics

If you are bringing electronics from the United States (i.e., laptop, hair dryer, cell phone), bring a converter, as the voltage and cycles in Singapore are different: Singapore uses three-pin plugs (round or square) and 220-240 volts AC at 50 cycles, while the United States uses two-pin plugs and 110-120 volts at 60 cycles. Anything with a built-in clock will not run correctly and even electronics like a hair dryer will run less powerfully if converted. Most electronics can be bought in Singapore at a reasonable price.

Install up-to-date anti-virus and firewall software on your computer before leaving the United States.

A tri-band cell phone, if you already own one, will work in Singapore (you can purchase one in Singapore), which uses the GSM system (see page 13 for more information about phones).

C. Items to Leave

Food – Because of Singapore's large international population, virtually every food product is available here.

Books – University and public libraries, rental book shops, and bookstores like Kinokuniya stock a wide variety of English-language books. Books are often more expensive here, but online retailers such as Amazon.com will ship to Singapore. (Library cards are relatively cheap (\$60 for a year subscription) and there are many libraries across the country.) Note that many e-book readers such as Kindle Fire will not download books from IP addresses in Singapore.

DVDs and CDs in bulk – Singapore has strict regulations about importing media.

Pets – Shipping a pet and boarding it for the mandatory one-month quarantine period is expensive, and many landlords will not accept pets.

Prohibited items – Do not bring illegal drugs, firearms, adult materials, or counterfeit goods. For more information, please see Possession of Controlled or Prohibited Items on page 24.

Winter clothes – Due to Singapore's tropical climate, you will not need winter clothes unless you plan on traveling to other countries in the region during their winter seasons.

Raincoat – Even though you want to protect your clothing from the rain, it is usually too humid to wear a raincoat due to Singapore's climate. (However, one of the former Fulbrighter said she wore hers all the time and was happy to have it.) Most Singaporeans just carry a small umbrella in their bags in case it rains.

Leather items-Because of Singapore's humid climate these items can grow mold if left in dark closets.

CHAPTER TWO:

LIVING IN SINGAPORE

I. Arrival in Singapore

Visitors must satisfy the following basic entry requirements before they are allowed to enter Singapore:

- A passport (valid for at least 6 months);
- A valid Singapore visa, if applicable;
- Sufficient funds to last for the intended period of stay in Singapore;
- Confirmed onward/return tickets (where applicable); and
- Entry facilities to their onward destinations (e.g., visas).

Your host institution will help you apply for the appropriate type of visa (e.g., Student Pass, Professional Visit Pass, or Training Visit Pass) from the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) or the Ministry of Manpower. However, students are responsible for applying and paying for the proper category of visa. With your U.S. passport and completed arrival card, at the airport you will be issued a Social Visit Pass -- a tourist visa stamp in your passport -- valid for 90 days. Grantees should check their passports before leaving the checkpoint to ensure that their Social Visit Pass is valid for at least 90 days. Many Fulbrighters enter Singapore on a Social Visit Pass, and then apply for a different category of visa. Note that although you can enter on a social visit pass, to secure housing and open a bank account you most likely need to have a more permanent employment or training pass. It is highly recommended to secure this paperwork (specifically, the “In-Principle Approval Letter”) PRIOR to arriving in Singapore.

To obtain Singaporean dollars, either use your ATM card or a money changer located in the airport.

Taxis in Singapore are clean, metered, and relatively cheap. Even with the surcharge for airport trips and night hours, your cab fare from the airport will likely be less than 50 Singapore dollars (SGD or S\$). See below for more information on taxis.

II. Getting Around Singapore

Singapore’s small size and excellent public transportation network make living without a car in Singapore fairly easy. One of the first things that you should do once you arrive in Singapore is purchase an EZ-link card from an MRT (subway) station. You can use your EZ-link card on buses and the metro system. To add money to your card (Singaporeans say “top-up” your card), just go to any MRT station or 7-11 store.

The pocket-sized TransitLink Guide is also helpful in finding your way around the island. The website www.streetdirectory.com is a priceless tool for navigating the city and finding public transit options. It has searchable maps of the city, as well as a searchable public transit guide. Other sites that are beneficial to planning routes around Singapore are www.gothere.sg or maps.google.com.

A. Singapore Mass Rapid Transit (MRT)

Singapore's mass rapid transit (MRT) system consists of four lines, the North-South, East-West, North-East and Circle lines. Most major attractions are accessible by MRT or a combination of MRT and taxi. View the SMRT web site, www.smrt.com.sg, for information on MRT locations as well as fares between MRT stations.

B. Singapore Bus System

Buses generally run every 10-15 minutes and fares are based on distance travelled starting at 55 cents. Bus stops usually display information listing the stops made on each bus line (it helps to count the number of stops, or at least know the landmarks to look for before your stop, because not all buses will tell you the stop name, and bus drivers are not always helpful). The Singapore Bus Services (SBS) web site, www.sbstransit.com.sg, offers a trip planner. Just type in your starting location and destination, and the system will tell you exactly what buses to take. The website www.gothere.sg is particularly helpful in routing destinations because it calculates how long and how much the bus, MRT and taxi would be for a specific route, but be careful of the walking directions (during transfer or at the end of the journey), they are often misleading. Thus, an additional search with www.maps.google.com is helpful to find the best walking path.

Another useful resource is the Singapore Bus Guide & Bus Stop Directory published by Mighty Minds® (ISBN: 708-02A 1247527). This book also contains MRT/LRT maps and fares.

C. Taxis

Taxis in Singapore are inexpensive and metered; drivers will usually take you to your destination using the shortest route. Taxi stands are strategically placed throughout Singapore, which makes it easier to catch a cab during peak hours. You can also hail a cab on the street – provided the street is not marked with a zigzag white line – by raising your hand slightly. On rainy days and during rush hour, it is sometimes easier to simply call for a cab, as it can be hard to hail a taxi on the street during these times. However, there is a booking fee when calling for a cab. There are also surcharges at peak hours and at Electronic Road Pricing (ERP) gantries. Taxi drivers will explain all charges and give you a receipt, if you ask. You can call a cab using the numbers below:

Comfort Cablink	6552-1111
CitiCab	6552-2222
Tibs Taxis	6481-1211
SMART	6485-7777
Silver Cab	6363-6888

Riders should not eat or drink in taxis or smoke while waiting at taxi stands. Always exit the taxi on the curb side of the car. The luxury cabs, which use Mercedes, BMWs, etc.,

have significantly higher fees than the companies listed above. Also, you can text a cab by sending a text to 71222 in this format: “Book [unique zipcode] #[location details, e.g., “carpark entrance”]

III. Housing

Housing tends to be the biggest challenge for our Fulbright grantees. Singapore universities face challenges housing their visiting students and faculty, so Fulbright grantees should be prepared to look for housing in Singapore. Our past grantees have suggested waiting to find long term housing until after your arrival in Singapore.

A. House Hunting

You can begin searching for housing online before you leave the U.S. and it is encouraged that you make contact if you are interested in a room that you find, however, it is strongly discouraged that you finally decide on anything until you have seen the place in person and have met the people you will be living with. It is very expensive to live in an entire apartment by yourself; thus, you will often rent one room in a place with two or more flatmates. You will also have a couple of choices when looking for rooms:

- 1) Finding a room on your own or through an agent:
 - Using an Agent can be easier if you do not want to spend the time to look on your own, however, they usually charge at least ½ of the first month’s rent as a fee, and they usually work for the owners of the property, meaning they are not usually great at finding places with no live-in landlord.
- 2) Living with the owner of the property:
 - There are some things to consider about living with the owner (or landlord). 1) they may have rules such as, no cooking, no visitors, no washing socks or underwear in washing machine, limited days to use the washing machine, curfew, etc. 2) They may change these rules at any time, e.g., If you show them that you are not a slob in the kitchen, they may let you cook, or they may tell you later after you have been living there that you may not wash undergarments in the washing machine. 3) You would get to live with a Singaporean family that could be a great experience
- 3) Living with a family with children:
 - You can weed out a lot of places if you decide that you do or do not want to live with a family with children/other relatives.
- 4) Living in an HDB, condo or apartment:
 - HDB’s can be very small (they call it “cozy” in the ads) or they can be more spacious. Condos often have swimming pools, gym’s BBQ grills, but are usually smaller in comparison to the larger HDBs (at least the ones in a

Fulbright's price range). Apartments are similar to large HDBs or condos, but without all of the amenities.

You can begin searching for housing online before you leave the United States. Singapore Expats (<http://www.singaporeexpats.com/>) is a great resource for individuals preparing to move to Singapore. The site contains pertinent information about house hunting, such as price guides, location guides, and even apartments that are near MRT stations.

Navigating the webpages to look for housing online.

- i. <http://www.easyroommate.com.sg>
 1. Most useful site for finding flats offered by individuals, not agents.
 2. Can easily search different areas of Singapore for housing too.
 3. Negative – to get the most benefit of the site, you have to be a premium member which costs ~\$8/month. Once you are a premium member, you can read basic members messages, and they can read yours.
- ii. <http://singapore.craigslist.com.sg>
 1. Positive – site is free
 2. Big negative – many agents post multiple ads every day, so you have to weed through all the agents, if you do now want to go with an agent. This makes it hard to find posting by individuals, but it is possible.
- iii. <http://singapore.gumtree.sg>

This site is more similar to easyroommate, however, it is less well known, thus postings appear less frequently than on the above two sites. As of now it is a free site.
- iv. <http://www.singaporeexpats.com/>

Generally this site listed the top apartments and condos in the area, and were thus pretty expensive, and thus not a great resource for Fulbrighters. There are also very few new postings each month.

The next page contains a list of real estate agents and firms recommended by previous Singapore Fulbrighters. Please note that these are not endorsed by Fulbright or the U.S. Embassy. We recommend that you schedule appointments to view potential housing within the first few days after your arrival in Singapore; you may wish to make these appointments before you depart the United States.

B. Location and Types of Housing

Most Fulbrighters prefer living in centrally located areas of Singapore, such as Holland Village, near NUS, Orchard Road, or the Singapore River, rather than on the periphery. Though inexpensive, cab fares can add up, so you may wish to look for housing near markets, public transportation, and restaurants, all of which can be viewed on the Singapore Expats website provided above.

You will most likely live in an apartment rather than in a house. Most Singaporeans live in government-subsidized apartments called Housing Development Board (HDB) flats, with private condominiums and single-family houses other housing options.

Because of rental costs, you may wish to either find a roommate or rent a room in an occupied HDB flat, condo, or house. If you decide to rent a room, be sure to specify in your rental contract your access to common areas and facilities such as the kitchen and washing machine. Previous Fulbrighters have found it hard to arrange shared housing with other Fulbrighters because arrival dates can differ significantly.

Some questions you might consider asking when visiting apartments: (1) Is cooking allowed? What types? (2) Are visitors allowed? (If living with a family, this is often not allowed.) (3) Is internet provided? (It is difficult to secure your own on less than a year contract.)

C. Rental Agreements and Amenities

Once you've identified a property that you like, you or your agent will need to negotiate with the landlord. You should get all commitments in writing from the property owner, not the realtor. Your rental agreement should specify what the landlord provides. Please check with your landlord to inquire about the costs of repairs, as well as to determine which party is responsible for repairs and maintenance (e.g., air conditioning).

Standard appliances in Singapore vary slightly from those in typical American housing. There will be a small refrigerator, a gas stove, and a washing machine. You are unlikely to have an oven, dishwasher, or clothes dryer. If you choose a unit with ceiling fans (a good idea since air conditioning is expensive), be sure to specify in your lease that the fans convey with the property. If you choose a unit with air conditioning, be prepared to pay more in utilities (most Singaporeans only use it in the evenings). You can also negotiate with the landlord to provide a fan in your room if there isn't already in there (highly recommended). If there is any furniture (fan, bed, desk, curtains, wardrobe, chair) in your room be sure to specify in your lease that all the items convey with the property, or if they don't that the landlord will buy new ones to replace what is vacated.

Before signing your lease, ensure that everything works and document any pre-existing damage. In Singapore, it is common for the tenant to pay the real estate agent a commission fee of half of one month's rent. (It's also common to pay a government tax, known as a stamp fee, upon signing the lease.)

D. Local Real-Estate Agents and Firms

Please note that all contacts listed below were provided by previous Fulbrighters and are not endorsed by the Public Affairs Section.

Former Fulbrighters have recommended the following two agents:

1. Christina Chew – OrangeTee (www.orangetee.com)

430 Lorong 6 Toa Payoh
#08-01 OrangeTee Building
Singapore 319402
M (65) 9235 2017
T (65) 6471 8888
Christina.chew@orangetee.com

- She was very friendly, helpful and was the only agent who actually was on my side, not just in it to make money. She helped me negotiate the price (she suggested we talk the price down) and helped me request extra things for the apartment. She also listened to what I wanted and only found me places that met my requirements.

2. Stephen (he mostly posts on craigslist)

T (65) 8242 9177
Skype – VeganIsPeace

- Stephen is one of the very few agents that posts pictures of the room he lists. This was a very helpful thing and prevented me wasting my time looking at things I was not interested in. I didn't find an apartment with him, although I looked at several of his listings. He was also nice and friendly, but not quite as good at bargaining prices.

E. Words from 2010 and 2011 American Fulbrighters regarding housing

If you do find housing before you arrive do NOT wire money to secure your accommodations. Arrange a temporary place to stay at a hostel or find someone on www.couchsurfing.com.

When you find a place that interests you makes sure to view the property and talk to your potential roommates before making your final decision. If you are working with an agent, do not ever sign a check directly to that person. He/she should direct you to write a check to the agency itself, providing his/her agent ID.

Look at online advertisements to find roommates who have whole unit lease and need a replacement roommate. Moreover, be careful of advertisements online from unknown housing agents because they can take advantage of your ignorance of the housing market. Be wary of living in an owner-occupied apartment. Rooms in family-owned and occupied apartments are abundant in Singapore (as many families are looking to augment income), but the extra time and effort to find a roommate-type situation will be well worth the payoff.

Be prepared for the housing hunt to be a full-time job in your first few weeks. Mine was a daily routine of trawling the roommate-oriented sites (Craig's List, EasyRoommate), and scheduling daily apartment visits. It's important to meet the other tenants and get a feel for the apartment. Be cautious of nefarious situations, e.g., I encountered a possible

double agent- and owner-fraud situation, where the agent likely pulled the listing offline, as anyone could have, and then showed the apartment as if it was his listing in order to get a commission (I realized this issue when he asked me to sign the check directly to him). Further, the couple who claimed to own the apartment did not have any living room furniture or workable kitchen appliances, and they were headed on vacation almost immediately upon my supposed move-in date. I was made aware that it may be possible that they did not own the apartment, and were instead looking to take my deposit and first month's rent and leave me in the lurch. In sum: imagine a worst-case scenario and play it safe. Trust your instincts.

IV. Money and Banking

NOTE: You will be expected to pay deposits for cell phone contracts, utilities contracts, and 1-2 months of rent. Thus, it is important that you have access to large amounts of cash when you arrive. Traveler's checks might be best for this purpose.

A. ATM and Credit Cards

Before you leave the United States, make sure that you have an internationally recognized credit card and ATM card, as well as PIN numbers that will work overseas. Arrange to do your banking online to avoid late fees for payments delayed by international mail.

With a major credit card (Visa, MasterCard, American Express) and ATM card, you can easily live in Singapore without a local bank account. Most local utility bills (phone, cable, internet, cell phone, etc.) can be charged to your credit card automatically each month, or paid at post offices, 7-11 stores, or other offices in the downtown area. Hawker stands, food courts, local shops, and touristy areas such as Chinatown often do not accept credit cards. Check on fees for international transactions as some cards charge a high rate or have an inflated exchange rate.

B. Banking and NETS

All three Fulbrighters from 2011 opened local bank accounts. If you decide to open a local account, you will need your passport and student pass. One of the Fulbrighters said that the ATM fees for the bank back home were exorbitant, and outweighed the one-time transfer fee to open a local account. Once you have your student/employment pass, it is a very straightforward process—it takes less than half an hour—as they have accounts specific to ex-pats.

A local checking account enables you to write checks to local companies and access Singapore's local debit system with a Network Electronic Transfer System (NETS) card. Most retailers accept the NETS card. Most local banks automatically issue a NETS (or debit) card when you open a checking account, but check with your bank on its policy. With your NETS card, you can pay bills at stores and Self-Service Automated Machines (SAM). You can also use your NETS card at any AXS machine – these are multi-

application transaction terminals where you can access debit and credit card transactions and store value on cash cards.

POSB/DBS is a local bank that you can open an account with once you have your visa. They do require a small amount to remain in your account while it is open, but it is significantly less than the amount Citibank-Singapore requires. Another benefit to having a POSB/DBS account is that you can pay with NETS (similar to debit) for many things around town, when credit cards are not always taken. Also, many places such as the movies and Singapore attractions offer a small discount if you use your POSB/DBS account when paying.

C. Writing Checks in Singapore

Singapore checks differ from American checks. If you open a local checking account, have the bank representative show you the Singapore style of writing checks. When writing a check in Singapore you must:

1. Draw two parallel lines in the upper left hand corner, next to the bank logo.
2. Enter the date in the following format: DDMMYY.
3. Draw a line through the words “or bearer” appearing next to the “pay” line when writing a check to a specific person or organization. If you make a check out to “cash” you do not need to cross out “or bearer.”

Singapore banks insist on perfect checks. If you make a mistake when writing a check, you must void it. Banks may refuse to honor your check if the signature does not match your signature on file in their records. Practice your signature before you open an account!

Changing money—You can get better rates at money changer booths than at banks for changing cash and traveler’s checks. The best rates, as of January 2012, are at the Raffles Place Arcade, second floor money changer booths. You can also bargain on the rate with the money changer if you’re changing large amounts (500+ USD).

Fulbrighters report that the best money changers they know of are: 1. The Arcade at Raffles Place; and 2. Mustafa Center in Little India. In both places you have to look around at all the changers to find the ones that offer the best rates that day. Also, \$100 bills get a better exchange rate than \$50s, \$20s and lower. Additionally, you are allowed to bring in up to \$30,000 Singapore dollars (~23K USD) without having to declare it. You get a much better (MUCH better) exchange rate if you change at a money changer than via ANY alternative method, e.g., wire transfer, ATM withdrawal, etc. Thus, Fulbrighters suggest bringing as much cash as you feel comfortable carrying.

V. Telecommunications and Utilities

A. International Dialing and Service Providers

Dialing Directions and Access Codes

NOTE: Singapore is 12 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time, or 13 hours ahead of the East Coast during daylight savings time.

- Dial 100 for local directory information.
- Dial 104 for collect calls, operator-assisted calls, or international directory information.
- Singapore's Country and City Code is 65.
- For IDD calls: 001 – country code – city or area code – telephone number.
- From the U.S. to Singapore: 001 – 65 – 8-digit telephone number.
- From Singapore to the U.S.: 001 – 1 – Area Code – 7-digit telephone number.

Long-Distance Telephone Numbers

* NOTE: 800 numbers are not free outside of the United States.

Sprint: 800-017-7177

MCI: 800-011-2112

AT&T: 800-011-1111

Calling the United States

Skype (or any of the comparable Voice Over Internet Provider services) is the cheapest way to talk to family and friends in the States. Skype and Google Talk have been reliable means of international communication.

The next cheapest option is a phone card, which you can buy at 7-11 stores.

Singtel offers a series of different International Direct Dial (IDD) prefixes that offer varying degrees of cost vs. quality. "001" offers the best quality but the highest rate; "013" offers moderate quality at a less expensive rate; "019" offers voice-over-IP quality at a discount rate; and "020" offers discounted rates to Malaysia. A 15-minute call to the United States from Singapore using the "019" prefix costs 2.66 SGD. Using fixed-line long-distance service, it's generally much cheaper to call from Singapore to the United States than from the United States to Singapore.

Fixed-line Telephones

If you have a cell phone, you may not need a fixed-line residential telephone. Singtel is the primary provider of this service, offering a wide variety of plans. Check the Singtel website (<http://www.singtel.com>) for more information on rates and services.

Recent Fulbrighters note that they found no need for a fixed line.

B. Mobile Phones

If you want to purchase a cell phone (called a "hand phone" here), Singapore uses the Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) standard, which is common throughout Europe and Asia, but not the United States. If you have a tri-band, quad-band, or GSM digital mobile phone, you can dial out from Singapore.

There are three major mobile phone network providers in Singapore:

Singtel (<http://www.singtel.com>)

Starhub (<http://www.starhub.com.sg>)

M1 (<http://www.m1.com.sg>)

Because of the various service plans available, please visit their websites in order to choose the best package for you. When purchasing a SIM card for your hand phone make sure that to bring your passport or identity card.

All Singapore mobile phones use SIM-cards to identify themselves on the cell network. Therefore, you can easily move your directory number from one phone to another at will.

There are two ways to pay for cell phone air time: prepaid and postpaid. Prepaid works by buying top-up cards whenever your balance gets low. Postpaid is a contract for a minimum of 12 months, and it usually includes a handset discount. Several of the service providers have student plans at a discount. You will need a student pass in order to subscribe to such a plan. The Singaporean contract system is slightly different in that you pay for the coming month in advance, and then pay for any excess charges after the end of the month. The three different cellular companies offer many discounts for their prepaid cards. Some offer free incoming calls for 20 days after you "top up," some offer 100 free minutes, so make sure you check with the different companies so you know all the discounts you can get with that provider. Currently the rate for calling the U.S. using Singtel and Starhub ranges between \$0.08/min-\$0.16/min with the access numbers (4 numbers you dial before the number itself), which incidentally is exactly the same cost to call a Singapore number. The decision between prepaid and postpaid depends on how much calling you plan to do, and how long you will be in Singapore, and the convenience factor of monthly bills vs. purchasing top-up cards.

C. Internet phone services

In order to save money on international phone cards considering using Skype. Alternatively, Rebtel, is one of many (www.rebtel.com) phone card companies to consider. They charge \$0.02/minute to call the United States and it is free to sign up.

D. Internet

Internet access is widely available in Singapore through cable and DSL; a dial-up connection is not cost-effective. Singapore offers wi-fi access through wireless@sg to anyone in Singapore. It is free to sign up, but may have charges for usage. They have a listing of all the hot spots on their website. <http://home.singtel.com/wirelesssg/>.

Starhub (<http://www.starhub.com.sg>) and Singtel (<http://www.singtel.com>) are the two largest providers of internet services. Starhub accepts credit cards and can automatically bill your credit card each month. The Singapore government's website (<http://www.ida.gov.sg>) contains a report on different services.

There are some places (malls, libraries, Starbucks) that use wireless.sg. You just need to have a local phone number and you can have free access to wireless locations. Go to wireless.sg online to see where these places are.

E. Satellite and Cable Television

Satellite dishes are illegal in Singapore. Starhub (<http://starhub.com.sg>) is the country's only cable television provider. Starhub offers many English language channels found in the United States, as well as foreign language channels. It also offers pay-per-view, "on-demand," and digital cable service.

A typical package of 40 channels will include 15 to 20 programs that are recognized in the United States. Many rate plans exist, but a basic package can cost more than 50 SGD a month. Most of the packages include broadband internet access as well. Starhub regularly runs promotions that include free installation and hardware.

F. Utilities

If you must set up electricity services yourself, the government-run Singapore Power (<http://www.singaporepower.com.sg/index.html>) is the only electrical service-provider in Singapore.

VI. Medical Care and Services

A. Health Services in Singapore

Most Fulbrighters use the student health clinics at their universities. Some have gone to local polyclinics, which are government-subsidized health clinics staffed by doctors. To use a polyclinic, you'll need to bring your passport. It's also possible to visit private doctors, though you will probably need to pay the bill and apply to your insurance company for reimbursement. Doctors' bills are generally cheaper than in the United States.

Singaporean physicians speak English and practice medicine in a manner consistent with American expectations. Many of the local physicians receive specialty training in England, Australia, Canada, or the United States. Competent specialists in almost every field can be found here. If you need a recommendation for a particular type of doctor, the Public Affairs Section will facilitate a referral from Embassy medical personnel.

Singaporean doctors provide medications along with professional care. If you are given medications, ensure that the doctor or nurse writes down the name of the drug, the dosage, and how often to take the drug. If you see a doctor in Singapore, be sure to obtain a brief statement containing the medical findings, diagnosis, and the recommended treatment so the information can be reviewed and added to your medical record.

One Fulbrighter did her medical screening for visa approval at a SATA clinic and reported a positive experience. SATA clinics are community health clinics located across Singapore. They are cheap and reliable.

B. Emergency Medical Services

Please note that the care providers listed below are some of the many providers that have been used by Fulbrighters in the past and should not be considered an endorsement by the Public Affairs Section.

FIRE & AMBULANCE EMERGENCY: 995

Police Emergency: 999

Hospital Address	Telephone	Ambulance Service No.
Mount Elizabeth Hospital 3 Mount Elizabeth Singapore 228510	6737-2666	6731-2218 or 6731-2219
Gleneagles Hospital 6 Napier Road Singapore 258499	6473-7222	6473-2222
East Shore Hospital 321 Joo Chiat Place Singapore 427990	6340-8666 or 6473-2222	

C. Dental Care

Name & Title	Address	Telephone	E-mail
Dr. Tay (TP Dental Surgeons Pte. Ltd.)	The Penthouse 391B Orchard Road, #26-01 Ngee Ann	6737-9011	http://www.tpdental.com.sg/

	City Tower B, Singapore 238874		
Dr. Michael Ong (Lee & Ong Dental Surgeons)	545 Orchard Road, #B1-15/16 Far East Shopping Centre, Singapore 238882 Blk 18, Teck Whye Lane #01-97, Singapore 680018	Orchard Location: 6736-0267 Teck Whye Location: 6769-1302	Orchard Location: lodent@singnet.com.sg Teck Whye Location: lodent@singnet.com.sg
Dr. Go Wee Ser (W S Go & Associates Dental Surgeons)	290 Orchard Road, Paragon #09-16/17, Singapore 238859	6838-0922	gowsoms@singnet.com.sg
Dr. Tan Tzee Jen (Scotts Dental Centre)	1 Scotts Road, #15- 01 Shaw Centre, Singapore 228208	6887-0380	scottsdsc@singnet.com.sg
Dr. Florence Li (Aloha Dental Clinic)	14 Scotts Road, #04- 125 Far East Plaza, Singapore 228213	6738-2268 or 6733-2268	alohaden@singnet.com.sg
National Dental Centre	5, Second Hospital Avenue, Singapore 168938	Inquiries: 6324-9810 Appointments: 6324-8802	http://www.ndc.com.sg/

D. Pharmacies and Prescriptions

Pharmacists are usually on duty from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. If you have a favorite brand of medicine, either bring or ship enough for the duration of your stay in Singapore. Although Singapore's pharmacies stock a wide variety of European and some American brand name medications, some medicines are more expensive in Singapore. Also, some medications and medical supplies available over-the-counter in the United States require a doctor's prescription here, or can only be acquired from the pharmacist (e.g., Dramamine, ibuprofen, Actifed).

If you take any medications regularly, determine early on if you can get the same brand or its generic equivalent in Singapore. You can email the Public Affairs Section with the name of the medication and we will check with Embassy medical personnel. If the medication is not available in Singapore, discuss your options with your physician.

In order to get prescription medications at a Singapore pharmacy, you will need a prescription from a local doctor. To give you time to see a local doctor for a prescription, you should bring at least a month's supply of the medications that you take regularly. Medications should be in the original prescription bottles with the patient's name on

them. Bring a letter from your doctor if you are bringing any prescription medication into Singapore.

Please keep in mind that the shipment of some medicines and prescriptions may be held up by Singapore Customs inspectors. Another option is to order over-the-counter and prescription medications not available in Singapore from online suppliers such as Drugstore.com.

D1. For Women

Regarding birth control or Plan B call local main hospitals and ask to speak to someone in the pharmacy to see if your medication from the United States is also available in Singapore. Pharmacies usually have a database of medicines in Singapore and its availability.

PHARMACIES OPEN ON WEEKENDS

Guardian Pharmacy-Jelita
1st Floor, Cold Storage, Jelita Complex
293 Holland Road / Jalan Jelita
Singapore
Tel: 6469-0700

Guardian Pharmacy-Centerpoint
176 Orchard Road
#B-1-05 Centerpoint
Singapore
Tel: 6737-4835, 6732-0893

CHAPTER THREE:

SOCIETY AND CUSTOMS

I. Singapore Protocol Suggestions

Singapore appears Westernized in many ways, but Asian etiquette applies in many situations. Punctuality and a high degree of courtesy are expected. Singapore is a multicultural society that welcomes visitors from other countries. As in any foreign country, you should be polite and observant of local behavior, and abide by local laws.

Exchanging Business Cards

Consider having business cards made displaying your name, institutional affiliation (e.g., National University of Singapore), and contact information. It is a great way to exchange contact information quickly.

There are NUS template business cards that be made through NUS. A good place to have business cards printed is in the basement of Sim Lim Square.

Singaporeans typically shake hands and exchange business cards when meeting for the first time. With ethnic Chinese Singaporeans, present your card with both hands, with your name facing the recipient. Accept a business card with both hands, look at it with interest, and place it on the table in front of you.

For religious reasons, some Muslims prefer not to shake hands with the opposite gender. Therefore, when meeting a Muslim of the opposite sex, it is best to wait until an ethnic Malay Singaporean offers his/her hand to you. Some Indians in Singapore are also Muslim, so the same courtesy applies. When passing your card or other items to ethnic Malays or Indians, use only your right hand.

Attire

University students dress casually. For more formal situations, such as meeting your academic advisor or work supervisor for the first time, lightweight business casual clothing is appropriate. Because of the warm climate, many men wear an open collared shirt without a jacket, instead of a suit, to all but the most important business meetings. When visiting holy places, such as mosques or temples, ensure your legs and shoulders are covered; be prepared to remove your shoes and perhaps cover your head.

Dinner Invitations

When visiting Singaporeans, remove your shoes before entering their homes. You can bring a small gift, such as flowers or food, which the host will put aside and open after the guests have left.

Offer visitors to your home something to eat or at least drink. Be aware of dietary restrictions (Muslims do not eat pork or drink alcohol; some Buddhists and Hindus do not eat any meat at all). During the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, Muslims do not eat or drink between sunrise and sunset.

In scheduling events, remember that Muslim Singaporeans often visit a mosque on Fridays (between noon and 2 p.m.).

Singaporeans are reserved and often keep to themselves in public places. It is not easy to talk to any stranger on a bus or train. It takes a while for Singaporeans to warm up to strangers and new friends. Singaporeans have been likened to the (in)famous king of tropical fruits, the durian, thorny and prickly on the outside but soft and fragrant (or pungent, depending on who you ask) on the inside.

II. Singapore Safety, Laws and Procedures

A. Safety and Security

Singapore is one of the safest countries in the world; however, crimes do occur. Criminal acts are typically crimes of opportunity, such as purse snatching. As in any city, visitors should remain vigilant about their personal security and be alert in crowded buses, streets, and markets.

All people in Singapore, whether citizens or expatriates, are subject to the same laws and consequences for violating those laws. Please be aware that some Singapore laws differ from those in the United States.

B. Laws

Alcohol Purchases and Consumption

The legal drinking age is 18. Drunkenness in public places is an offence. First time offenders may be punished with a fine not exceeding 1000 SGD or imprisonment of no more than one month. Subsequent offenses may be punished with a fine of 2000 SGD or imprisonment of no more than three months.

Chewing Gum

It is not illegal to chew gum in Singapore (except where specifically marked), but you must dispose of the gum in a garbage bin or face a fine. You can purchase sugarless gum at pharmacies or bring in gum from other countries in quantities appropriate for personal consumption (not resale).

Drug Laws

Importing, selling, and using illegal narcotics is forbidden and punishable by severe penalties, up to and including death. Anyone caught in Singapore with drugs in his/her system, even if consumed outside of Singapore, may be punished as if the drugs were consumed in Singapore, in accordance with Singapore law.

Littering

Public places are kept very clean due to harsh penalties against littering, so be sure to use the trash bins and ashtrays.

Loitering and Congregating

Loitering or congregating with the intent to commit a criminal act is an offense. Similarly, a group of five or more persons congregating with the intent to commit an offense is considered "unlawful assembly."

Outraging the Modesty of a Female

Outraging the modesty of a female is a criminal offense. This includes uninvited touching and suggestive comments and rude behavior.

Possession of Controlled or Prohibited Items

Controlled and prohibited items may not be in your possession entering or departing Singapore, or during your stay here, without prior approval from the government of Singapore. These items include all weapons, handcuffs, collapsible batons and night sticks, bulletproof vests, explosives and ammunition, or parts of guns (including empty shell casings or empty magazines), toy guns, antique guns, cigarette lighters resembling weapons, all swords, daggers, bayonets, pepper spray, tear gas spray, fireworks, butterfly knives, switchblade knives, and stun guns. All baggage (hand carried and checked) is subject to search and x-ray screening, both on arrival and departure. Baggage on civilian aircraft at Changi Airport is in Singaporean territory and subject to these restrictions. If the Singapore authorities discover any of these items in your possession, you will be detained and could be charged under Singapore law.

C. Police Procedures

Police Questioning

If you are stopped by the police for any reason, be cooperative, friendly and courteous.

Rights upon Arrest

If arrested, you have the right to legal counsel, but only at a time when the investigating officer feels it is appropriate. This may not be until after your statement has been recorded and you have posted bail. You are usually permitted one phone call.

Police Custody

If arrested for a serious offense, you must be brought before a magistrate or released within 48 hours after the arrest, except if the investigating officer requests that the magistrate extend the detention.

CHAPTER FOUR:

RECREATION AND TRAVEL

I. Recreation

A. Uniquely Singapore

Singapore is indeed unique, with a diverse community of people and culture. Most visitors appreciate the opportunity to indulge in authentic Indian, Malay, Chinese, Thai, Japanese, and Western cuisine. For a list and description of “must-sees” while in Singapore, please visit the *Uniquely Singapore* Web site at <http://www.visitsingapore.com/publish/stbportal/en/home.html>.

We have compiled a short list of suggested activities in Singapore—it’s certainly not all-encompassing, but it should get you started!

- ✚ Touring the **Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM)** and the Peranakan Museum to learn about the region’s cultural history.
- ✚ Cruising the **Singapore River** in a bumboat.
- ✚ Going to **Little India** for henna tattoos, flower garlands, and fish head curry, and during Deepavali to soak in the festivities.
- ✚ Visiting **Chinatown** to see the quaint shophouses and eat on Smith Street, and for the Moon Cake Festival and Chinese New Year.
- ✚ Exploring the textile stores and Middle Eastern restaurants on **Arab Street**.
- ✚ Shopping the night market in **Geylang** (the Malay area of town) during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.
- ✚ Eating satay outdoors at **Lau Pa Sat** (a wrought iron Victorian hawker’s center).
- ✚ Seeing a Singaporean comedian perform after you’ve been here six months and understand the jokes. Try Kumar the drag queen’s show at Orchard Towers, or Selena Tan (either on her own or as part of the “Dim Sum Dollies”).
- ✚ Eating at a **Hawker Center**. *Makansutra* is a guidebook to the best food stalls.
- ✚ Getting a sense of Singapore’s colonial heritage at the **Raffles Hotel** or **Fullerton Hotel**.
- ✚ Learning about Singapore’s experience under the Japanese occupation during World War II at the **Changi Chapel and Museum**, **Old Ford Factory Museum**, or **Battlebox Museum**.
- ✚ Visiting the **Night Safari** to see the nocturnal animals at the Singapore Zoo.

- ✚ Taking an excursion to **Sentosa Island** to see **Underwater World**, play with the dolphins and go rolling downhill on the luge.
- ✚ Watch the sunset over the skyline from the roof of **Marina Bay Sands**.
- ✚ Listen to music at **BluJaz** or the **Esplanade** or other venues.
- ✚ Play **pick-up sports** (Frisbee, basketball, soccer) at local parks to meet the locals.

B. Libraries and Bookstores

Singapore has an excellent public library system, and most of its books are in English. The website of the National Library Board (<http://www.nlb.gov.sg>) lists locations of different branches. The site also contains events and activities offered by the library, including events for small children. To apply for a library card at any branch, you will need to show both your passport and your student pass, and pay a non-refundable registration fee plus an annual membership fee.

You can also rent books from private book stores like San Books at Plaza Singapura. First, you pay an amount that covers the cost of the book. Upon returning the book, you are refunded the amount that you paid upfront, minus a small fee.

If you are interested in purchasing books, there is the Kinokuniya bookstore at Ngee Ann City.

C. Night Life

- ✚ Clark Quay and Boat Quay (“quay” is pronounced “key”) – Stroll along the Singapore River, drink margaritas at Café Iguana (cheapest during happy hour), then head to Ministry of Sound, a two-story dance club, which plays a wide variety of music (disco, techno, hip-hop, R&B, etc).
- ✚ Emerald Hill – Bars and restaurants, near the middle of Orchard Road, directly across the street from the Somerset MRT station.
- ✚ Club Street – A collection of trendy and quaint bars, clubs and restaurants.
- ✚ Mohammed Sultan Road – Lined with clubs and young clubbers.
- ✚ Chijmes (pronounced “Chimes”) – A former convent offering picturesque night-time alfresco dining, as well as bars, clubs and shops.
- ✚ Holland Village – a bohemian gathering place with many eating outlets popular with university students and expatriates.

D. Movies and DVDs

Many cinemas are actually cineplexes, housing up to ten screens. Movies are very popular and weekend shows often have a full house. Unlike most theaters in the United States, seating is assigned when you buy the ticket. Therefore, if you wait until the last minute to buy your ticket, you may end up with poor seats.

The Uniquely Singapore website has a listing of cinemas and links to individual cinema websites, where you can get show times and buy tickets. You can also buy tickets at kiosks scattered around the city and at the cinema box offices.

DVDs

Singapore and the United States use different video formats, and are in different DVD regions (Singapore is in region 3, and the United States is in region 1). Therefore, DVDs purchased in one region may not work properly in the other. Be wary of playing DVDs from different regions on your laptop—although they will work initially, eventually the settings will become permanent, and you will be unable to play Region 1 DVDs. A good option is to purchase locally a world multi-system DVD player that will play DVDs (and CDs) from different regions.

For more information on DVD regions, please see

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/help/customer/display.html/202-4685240-8072647?nodeId=502554>.

E. From Sports and Fitness to Arts and Culture: Resources

Singaporeans participate in a wide variety of activities. Sports in Singapore range from wake boarding to bowling to martial arts, and fitness centers and health spas abound. As the intersection of a diverse range of cultures, Singapore also has a vibrant arts, culture and entertainment scene.

The number of options can be overwhelming. A good place to start is *Living in Singapore: A Reference Guide*, published by the American Association of Singapore and available in the Embassy's Community Liaison Office.

Other useful links:

www.visitsingapore.com – Singapore's tourism website

www.mica.gov.sg – Ministry of Information, Communication, and the Arts

www.sistic.com.sg – Information about cultural events

www.wildsingapore.com – Guide to nature in Singapore

www.nparks.gov.sg – National Parks Board of Singapore

www.nhb.gov.sg – Singapore’s multitude of museums

www.aasingapore.com – American Association of Singapore

www.awasingapore.org – American Women’s Association

www.primetime.org.sg – Primetime Business and Professional Women’s Association

www.singaporeexpats.com – Excellent resource for newcomers

For weekly things to do try www.timeoutsingapore.com *and* is.asia-city.com

II. Regional Travel

Bus

For travel to Malaysia, even as far as Kuala Lumpur, it is often most convenient and cheapest to go by bus (“coach”). Buses to Malaysia leave from several locations in Singapore. You can also cross into Malaysia and continue onward from the Larkin bus station outside of Johor Bahru. Tickets from Larkin to destinations in Malaysia will be cheaper than tickets from Singapore.

Budget Airlines

Singapore makes a great base for exploring the Asia-Pacific region, with a number of discount airlines operating from Singapore:

Air Asia	http://www.airasia.com
JetStar Asia	http://www.jetstarasia.com
Silk Air	http://www.silkair.com.sg
Scoot Airlines	http://www.flyscoot.com
Tiger Airways	http://www.tigerairways.com.sg
ValueAir	http://www.valueair.com.sg

Tickets from these airlines can be extremely cheap if purchased more than a month in advance. Please note that many budget airlines do not have assigned seating, so do not be alarmed if no seat is listed on your e-ticket.

Regular Airlines

Good deals are occasionally available from full-service airlines, or from online ticket sellers.

Bangkok Airways <http://www.bangkokair.com/>

Singapore Airlines <http://www.singaporeair.com.sg>

Zuji (associated with Travelocity) <http://www.zuji.com.sg>

Travel Agencies

You can also try travel agents, which advertise in section 581 of the Singapore *Straits Times* classified ads.

If you plan to travel over a public holiday or during the school holidays, buy your ticket at least three months in advance, as flights are often fully booked, and tickets – if available – are extremely expensive when purchased less than two months before the holiday.

American tourists may need to get visas in advance for some destinations and may be able to get visas on arrival for others. The rules for Singaporean and U.S. citizens often differ, so be sure to check in advance with the embassy of the country you plan to visit. Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (<http://www.mfa.gov.sg>) lists the foreign missions accredited to Singapore. Before traveling, check the U.S. Department of State website for travel warnings and for the Consular Information Sheet on the country you plan to visit (<http://travel.state.gov>).

If you're planning to do a lot of regional travel, it is convenient to have a set of ten ASEAN-size passport pictures taken when you get here (these are 35 mm by 45 mm). You will need the photos for visa applications.

And finally, congratulations again on your selection as a Fulbrighter! We look forward to meeting you.